

## CHAPTER 5

# RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

*This chapter discusses battalion retrograde operations, which are characterized by centralized planning and decentralized execution. The next higher authority (normally brigade) must approve retrograde operations.*

### Section I DOCTRINE

Retrograde operations are organized movements to the rear of or away from the enemy. They can be forced by enemy action or executed voluntarily.

#### 5-1. PURPOSE

A retrograde operation can be used to avoid decisive combat under unfavorable conditions, to maintain freedom of maneuver, or to save forces for decisive action elsewhere. The underlying reason for conducting a retrograde operation is to improve a tactical situation or to prevent a worse one from occurring. A battalion conducts a retrograde as part of a larger force—

- To harass, exhaust, resist, and delay the enemy.
- To gain time.
- To reposition or preserve forces.
- To use a force elsewhere.
- To draw the enemy into an unfavorable position.
- To shorten lines of communication and supply.
- To clear zones for friendly use of chemical or nuclear weapons.
- To conform to the movement of other friendly forces.

#### 5-2. TYPES OF RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

Types of retrograde operations areas follows:

a. **Delay.** A delay trades space for time, inflicts maximum damage on the enemy, and avoids decisive engagement.

b. **Withdrawal.** A withdrawal breaks contact (frees a unit for a new mission).

c. **Retirement.** A retirement moves a force not in contact to the rear.

#### 5-3. PLANNING

All retrograde operations are difficult and risky. To succeed, they must be well organized and well executed.

a. **Leadership and Morale.** The offensive spirit must be maintained among subordinate leaders and soldiers. Movement to the rear can be seen as a defeat or a threat of isolation unless soldiers have confidence in their leaders and know the purpose of the operation and their roles. Rumors are suppressed and results of successful offensive actions are disseminated. Firm control of movements to the rear is essential.

b. **Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Security.** Timely and accurate intelligence is vital. The battalion commander must rely more heavily on brigade and division intelligence assets, and he should ensure brigade knows the battalion's PIR. The battalion commander must constitute a security force that is strong enough—

(1) To deceive the enemy and defeat his intelligence efforts.

(2) To overwatch retrograding units.

(3) To provide rear guard, flank security, and choke point security.

c. **Mobility.** The battalion must increase its mobility and slow or halt the enemy for the retrograde to be successful. If the battalion has less mobility than the enemy, the battalion must develop contingency plans for operation as a bypassed force.

(1) The battalion improves its mobility—

(a) By reconnoitering routes and battle positions.

(b) By fully employing organic and attached transportation assets.

(c) By employing Army aviation.

(d) By improving roads, controlling traffic flow, and restricting refugee movement to routes not used by the battalion.

(e) By rehearsing movements. To reduce congestion and confusion, each unit is given its own route. If routes must converge, an order of movement is established and times or events that start movement are specified.

(f) By evacuating casualties, recoverable supplies, and excess materiel before the operation.

(g) By displacing nonessential CSS activities early in the operation.

(2) The battalion degrades the mobility of the enemy—

(a) By occupying and controlling choke points and terrain that dominate high-speed avenues of approach.

(b) By positioning air defense and security forces at critical points.

(c) By destroying roads, bridges, and raft and ford sites on the avenues not required for friendly forces.

(d) By improving existing obstacles and covering them with fire.

(e) By employing indirect fire and smoke to degrade the enemy's vision and to slow his rate of advance. By ensuring continuous coverage, battalion mortars move in split sections.

(f) By conducting spoiling attacks to unbalance the enemy and force him to deploy.

(g) By covering movements by fire.

d. **Deception.** The purpose of the deception is to prevent the enemy from knowing when a retrograde is taking place. Deception provides security to cover moving units and their inherent vulnerabilities. It also provides surprise, which is vital to success. The proper use of deception causes indecision and more delays in enemy actions. Deception is achieved by maintaining normal patterns of activity such as radio traffic, artillery fires, patrolling, and vehicle movements. Other measures include using dummy minefield or decoy positions, feints, and demonstrations to indicate other than actual activities, and employing all available EW measures. When possible, retrogrades are conducted under limited visibility conditions. Retrograde plans are never discussed on nonsecure radio nets.

e. **Conservation of Combat Power.** The commander must know the relationship between conservation of combat power and risk. Leaving too few combat elements in contact with the enemy could result in a pursuit. The commander must conserve his combat power—

(1) By covertly displacing less mobile units before the retrograde, especially nonessential CSS elements.

(2) By using mobile forces, such as antitank assets, to cover the retrograde of less mobile forces.

(3) By using the fewest essential forces to provide security for the retrograde of the main body.

## Section II DELAY OPERATIONS

A delay is an operation in which a force trades space for time while avoiding decisive engagement and inflicting maximum destruction on the enemy. The battalion might be ordered to delay as part of the covering force, in an economy-of-force operation, or if forces are inadequate for defense. The battalion is the lowest unit to conduct a delay operation. Companies defend or disengage and move as part of a battalion delay.

#### 5-4. PURPOSE

The delay incorporates all the aspects of a defense, but it emphasizes preserving the force and maintaining a mobility advantage. The battalion can attack, defend, or conduct other actions during the delay, such as ambushes and raids, to destroy or slow the enemy.

#### 5-5. FUNDAMENTALS

The basic concept for a delay is to retain freedom to maneuver while forcing the enemy to deploy repeatedly against successive BPs. As the enemy uses FA deploys ground units, and begins maneuver against the delay force, the battalion moves to subsequent BPs to make the enemy start the same time-consuming process again. In so doing, the battalion trades space for time. A delay is impossible if the initiative is left to the enemy. Therefore, the commander must try to seize the initiative.

**a. Centralize Control and Decentralize Execution.** A delay is conducted on a wide front with maximum forces in contact and minimum forces in reserve. This results in a series of independent actions. Therefore, antitank, engineer, and air defense assets are often attached to companies or scouts. In the delay, units must maintain enemy contact and flank security. This helps detect enemy attempts to bypass or surround elements of the delay force or to achieve a penetration that would prevent the success of the mission. Control is maintained through the use of phase lines, checkpoints, and adequate communications.

**b. Use Terrain.** Cross compartments are natural delay lines formed by parallel ridgelines or water obstacles across the enemy axis of advance. Delay positions should be on terrain features that control the likely avenues of enemy approach. They should block the enemy where his movement is most centralized and should allow the longest delay with the fewest soldiers. Ideal terrain provides long-range observation and fires, offers concealment, and provides for covered routes of withdrawal.

**c. Force the Enemy to Deploy Repeatedly.** Enemy reconnaissance elements are ambushed if possible. The enemy main body is engaged at maximum range of all weapons to cause the enemy to deploy and maneuver. Repeated use of this technique slows the enemy and allows the commander to exchange space for time. As

much of the enemy force is destroyed as possible without decisive engagement.

**d. Use Obstacles.** Reinforcing and existing obstacles are used on high-speed routes. They disrupt the enemy's progress, force him into selected avenues of approach, or block him from high-speed avenues of approach to gain time for disengagement. For the delay force to be effective, obstacles (including FASCAM) must be covered by fire. Choke points to the rear of the delay force must be secured to prevent seizure by enemy forces infiltrated to the rear.

**e. Maintain Contact With the Enemy.** The delay force conducts continuous reconnaissance to maintain contact with the enemy. Enemy forces try to bypass, to envelop the flanks, or to penetrate between units conducting the delay.

**f. Avoid Decisive Engagement.** Positions in a delay action are occupied only long enough to force the enemy to deploy and maneuver. Disengagement criteria must be specified. The delay force moves from one delay position to another without becoming decisively engaged with the enemy unless required. It maintains freedom to maneuver.

**g. Achieve Depth.** Depth is achieved to the extent possible based on the terrain, enemy abilities, friendly strengths, and mobility.

**h. Use Long-Range Fires.** The delay force uses long-range fires to halt, confuse, and disrupt the enemy as far forward as possible.

**i. Achieve Surprise.** Surprise is achieved through selection of different types of positions at different intervals. The delay force uses obstacles, counterattacks, ambushes, raids, sudden massing of fires, and smoke.

**j. Establish Flexibility.** Flexibility is established through mission-type orders that provide an adequate means of communication, event-oriented disengagement criteria, a provision of mobility, deployment in depth, contingency planning, and use of reserves.

#### 5-6. DEGREES OF RISK

The commander specifies the degree of risk, which is used to aid in understanding how the delay is to be fought. He determines whether time or the preservation of the force is more important. Specified times for holding the enemy forward of delay lines or positions indicate increased degrees of risk.

a. **Low Risk.** The battalion must delay the enemy as long as it can without accepting decisive engagement. At the same time, it must maintain the combat effectiveness of the task force. No time limit is specified-the battalion trades space for time.

b. **High Risk.** A delaying force that must hold the enemy forward of a delay line or other location for a specified time is described as having a high degree of risk. The battalion may have to accept decisive engagement to gain more time.

## 5-7. METHODS OF DELAY

The two methods of conducting a delay are *delay from successive positions* and *delay from*

*alternate positions*. Either be be modified to fit the situation. The delaying force can select one method or can combine methods. A company might be in successive platoon positions along a dangerous avenue of approach while the rest of the battalion is delaying by alternate positions.

a. **Delay from Successive Positions.** A delay from successive positions involves fighting rearward from one position to the next, holding each as long as possible or for a specified time period (Figure 5-1). In this type of delay, all companies are committed on each of the battalion delay positions or across the sector on the same phase line.

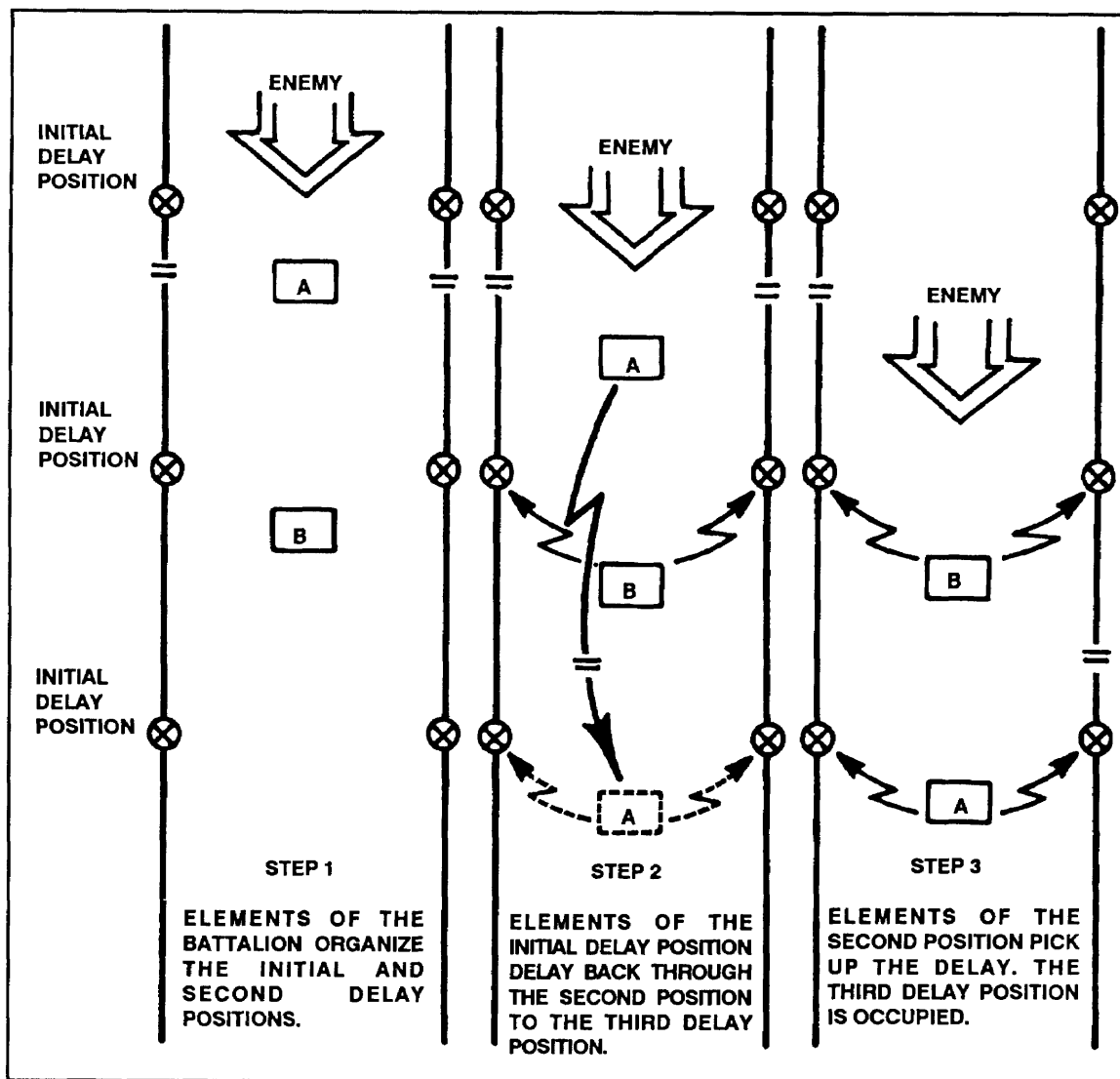


Figure 5-1. Delay from successive positions.

(1) A delay from successive positions is used when a sector is so wide that available forces cannot occupy more than a single line of positions. The disadvantages of this delay are lack of depth, less time to prepare successive positions (than in a delay from alternate positions), and the possibility of gaps between units. When ordered to move, the battalion disengages, moves, and occupies the next designated position.

(2) A part of the unit displaces directly to the rear when the order to begin the delay is received and occupies the next designated position. The rest of the unit maintains contact with the enemy between the first and second

delay positions. As these elements pass through the second position, the forces on that position engage the enemy at maximum effective range. When the battalion can no longer hold the position without becoming decisively engaged, it moves to the next successive position.

(3) If a high-risk delay is required or becomes necessary, the battalion retains the terrain until the conditions required to justify the high risk are met. The battalion then conducts the delay.

b. **Delay from Alternate Positions.** A delay from alternate positions can be used when a force has a narrow sector or has been reinforced to allow positioning in depth (Figure 5-2). This is the preferred method of delay.

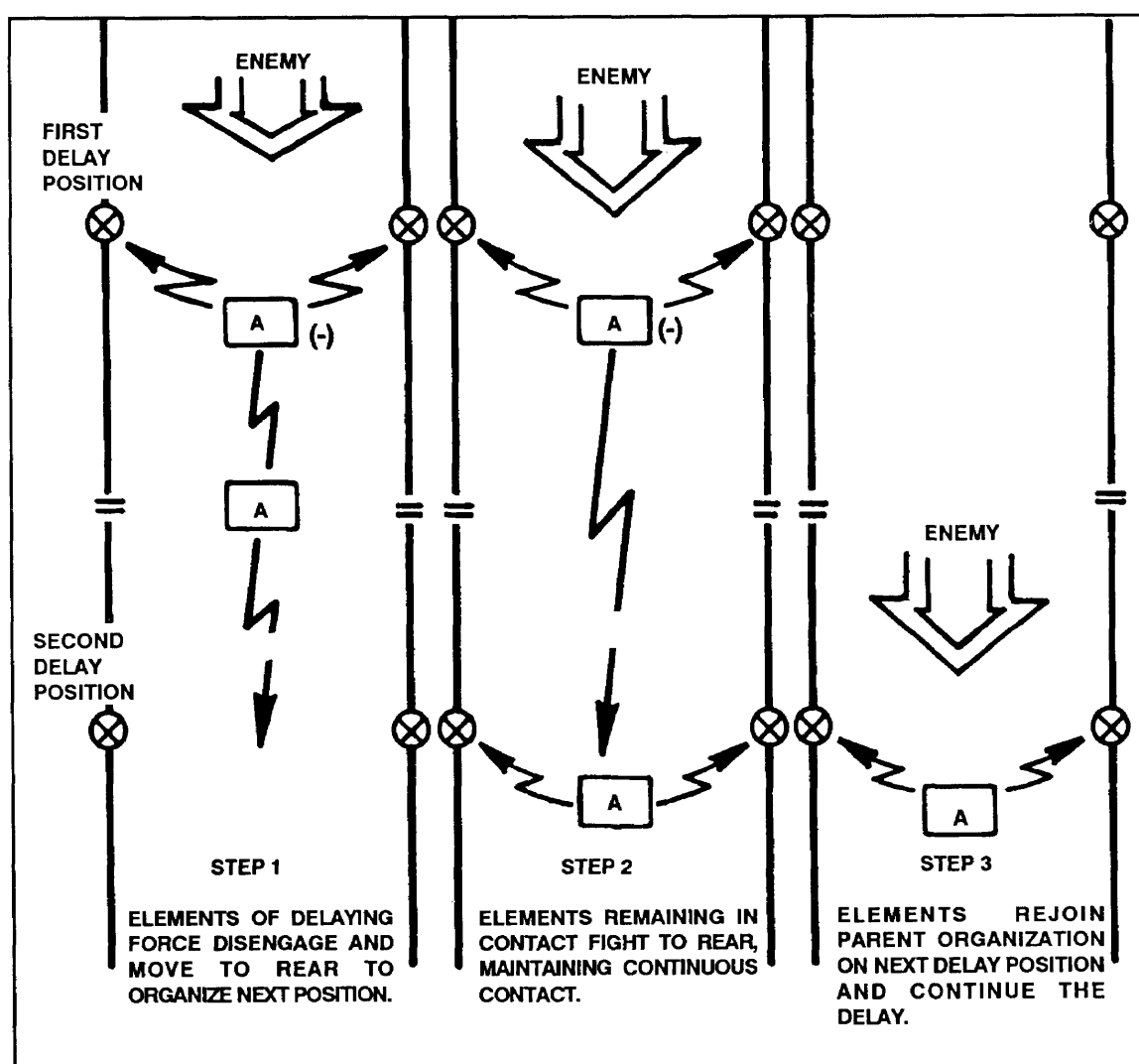


Figure 5-2. Delay from alternate positions.

(1) One or more companies employ this method to occupy the initial delay position and engage the enemy. The other companies occupy and prepare a second delay position. These elements alternate movement in the delay. While one element is fighting, the other occupies the next position in depth and prepares to assume responsibility for the fight.

(2) Units occupying the initial delay position can delay between it and the second position. When the delaying units arrive at the second delay position, they move through or around the units that are occupying the second position and occupy the third delay position. The units on the second delay position assume responsibility for delaying the enemy; the delaying procedure is then repeated. Moving around the unit on the next delay position is preferred because this simplifies passage of lines. The alternate method provides the greater amount of security to the delay force and more time to

prepare and improve delay positions. It requires continuous coordination of maneuver.

#### 5-8. METT-T ANALYSIS

Basic factors that affect the methods of delay should be considered during METT-T analysis (Table 5-1).

a. **Mission.** The battalion commander must know his commander's intent before he decides how to delay. This intent is expressed in terms of time, terrain (or space), and presentation of the force; it indicates the degree of risk the battalion commander must accept.

b. **Enemy.** The commander must use all intelligence sources to determine the enemy's strength, location, mobility, and capability. The S2 should provide his assessment of the situation and recommendations as to enemy COAs to the battalion commander or S3. The more the enemy's relative firepower, protection, and mobility exceeds that of the delaying force, the more a delay on alternate positions becomes favorable.

METHOD OF DELAY	FAVORED WHEN	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
DELAY FROM SUCCESSIVE POSITIONS	SECTOR IS WIDE  FORCES AVAILABLE PREVENT SPLIT OPERATIONS	INCREASED ABILITY TO MASS FIRES	LIMITED DEPTH TO THE DELAY POSITIONS  LESS TIME AVAILABLE TO PREPARE EACH POSITION  LESS FLEXIBLE
DELAY FROM ALTERNATE POSITIONS	SECTOR IS NARROW  FORCES ARE ADEQUATE FOR SPLIT POSITIONS	ALLOWS POSITIONING IN DEPTH  ALLOWS MORE TIME FOR POSITION PREPARATION AND EQUIPMENT AND SOLDIER MAINTENANCE	REQUIRES CONTINUOUS COORDINATION  REQUIRES PASSAGE OF LINES

Table 5-1. Comparison of methods of delay.

c. **Terrain.** The commander/S3 analyzing terrain (IAW OCOKA) determines how to use the terrain to gain and maintain a mobility advantage over the enemy. He must consider factors that favor delaying from BPs or sectors.

(1) Conditions that favor delaying from BPs include a narrow delay sector that allows mutual support between company BPs. Also included are well-defined avenues of approach to canalize the enemy that dominates terrain along avenues of approach. Conversely, conditions favoring delaying in sector are wide sectors that prevent mutual support and a lack of well-defined avenues of approach and dominating terrain.

(2) The battalion commander must consider how many suitable delaying positions are available in depth and how much delay (time) can be obtained on each position. Bad weather or poor visibility might require him to narrow sectors. Limited visibility and the lack of defensible terrain in depth might favor delaying on successive positions to aid command and control.

(3) Key terrain includes defensible delay positions, choke points, and routes of withdrawal.

d. **Troops and Time Available.** The battalion commander must know what assets are available to him and how the time available influences the mission. If the battalion is reinforced with tanks, delay on alternate positions can be used by placing tanks with some infantry forward, thus allowing the remaining infantry to prepare positions in depth. Tanks can use their mobility, firepower, and armor protection to move quickly to a subsequent position. Also, attack helicopters can be used to provide antiarmor and flank protection and to overwatch for disengaging infantry. If a high-risk delay is ordered, forces can be concentrated forward. This may require successive positioning.

## 5-9. PLANNING

The initial delay position is specified in the order or on an overlay. Instructions pertaining to the delay sector and the time of the delay are also given. The plan must be flexible enough to react to the enemy's attack wherever or whenever it occurs. Brigade or higher headquarters can also

prescribe the method of delay, phase lines, and successive or alternate delaying positions. Within this framework, the battalion commander develops his tentative plan of maneuver and fire support, and he gives planning guidance to his staff.

a. **Task Organization.** The battalion commander, based on the factors of METT-T, organizes for combat and integrates all available assets.

b. **Command and Control.** Command and control *must* ensure order and simplicity. It is aided by control measures, communications redundancy, locations and organization of the main CP and command group, and the delegation of authority to subordinate commanders. Also, proper use of graphic control measures portrays the commander's intent.

c. **Scheme of Maneuver.** The commander's scheme of maneuver describes how he envisions the delay taking place. The commander organizes the delay around a series of ambushes or engagement areas to keep the enemy off guard, to slow and harass him, and to reduce his forces. The concept might require a series of contingency plans such as ambushes, use of artillery, spoiling attacks, and counterattacks. The commander can describe the successive or alternate method of delay or a combination of these. He must be aware of gaps in his dispositions and try to strengthen them. He should consider employing artillery, sensors, security patrols, and obstacles.

d. **Courses of Action.** The following should be considered in developing COA to accomplish the delay mission:

(1) Delaying forces try to maintain a mobility advantage over the attacker. Enemy closure rates for the terrain should be calculated during war-gaming and compared to friendly displacement rates between positions. Time-distance factors dictate the amount of time the commander has to engage the enemy and to move his unit before becoming decisively engaged. These times should be calculated for each avenue of approach and disseminated to soldiers on positions along these avenues.

(2) Situational templates show the commander how the enemy might deploy and operate within the constraints imposed by weather and terrain. They help him to identify

critical enemy activities and locations, to identify where to emplace obstacles, and to identify where decisive engagement is likely. Obstacles must slow or stop the enemy long enough for the battalion to disengage and displace.

(3) The commander assigns sectors of responsibility to each company during the planning for a delay. He assigns boundaries so that terrain features that control fire and observation into a sector belong to the unit responsible for that sector. He also designates contact and coordinating points. Existing obstacles are improved, and reinforcing obstacles are built within the limitations of available materials, time, and manpower. However, unless obstacles are adequately covered by fire, they will not halt the enemy's progress.

(4) Battle positions are preferred in the delay if the terrain is suitable. The commander must emphasize reconnaissance outside the BP, preparation of routes for disengagement, and coordination for passage of lines. Units should know the routes from their primary, alternate, and supplementary positions. Less emphasis is placed on FPFs, installation of tactical and protective wire, and stockpiling of ammunition. The position is wide but not deep.

**e. Reconnaissance and Selection of Delay Positions.** A reconnaissance of delay positions is made as early as possible. Likely avenues of approach are located, and plans are made to deny their use to the enemy.

(1) The commander, in selecting positions, considers the same factors he would in selecting any defensive position (Chapter 4). He selects positions that allow long-range fields of fire with routes suitable for rearward and lateral movement, and he establishes priorities of movement on routes. Positions should incorporate good observation and long-range fields of fire, covered or concealed routes of movement to the rear, existing or reinforcing obstacles on the front and flanks, or all of these.

(2) The commander assigns company sectors astride likely avenues of approach. Where possible, a company covers one major avenue of approach and the terrain dominating that avenue. Each company sector should include at least one good route for rearward movement. If used, the reserve is located in an

area it can counterattack or move quickly to reinforce. The battalion main CP and combat trains are located well to the rear and behind the next rearward phase line. The command group remains well forward in positions best suited to control the operation.

**f. Combat Support.** The commander's plan for a delay addresses CS in a statement of how the battalion's assets are to be used. The assets are as follows:

(1) **Mortars.** The battalion mortars provide the most responsive fire support. Priorities of fires are flexible. A unit that can observe at longer ranges might have the priority at first; later, the priority might change to a unit facing an imposing threat. Mortars can operate by split section to cover a wide sector or to provide continuous fire in depth. The planned use of smoke to cover movement can decrease the number of HE rounds carried.

(2) **Antiarmor assets.** Antiarmor assets should remain under battalion control. They are employed in depth. The commander might want to employ TOWs to engage the enemy as far forward as possible. The TOWs would then move to subsequent positions to provide in-depth and overmatching fires for the conduct of the delay. In a delay against another infantry force, TOW assets can be used for surveillance (thermal sights) or, if equipped with automatic weapons, to increase the mobility and firepower of the delaying force.

(3) **Scouts.** The battalion scouts can perform several tasks during the delay however, overtasking should be avoided. Scouts can be employed forward of the initial delay position to provide early warning, to provide intelligence, and possibly to disrupt enemy forces through the employment of indirect fire. They can also be used to screen a flank, to reconnoiter routes throughout the sector, to conduct liaison with adjacent units, or to screen gaps between delay positions spread over a wide sector.

(4) **Artillery.** Fire support for the delay must be planned in depth for the entire sector. Mass fires along likely enemy avenues of approach cause him to button up, to strip away dismounted elements, and to direct him into kill zones. Commander's must plan fires, including smoke and artillery-delivered mines, to help units disengage



and must plan FPFs. The effective use of COLTs can help control these fires. Artillery-delivered mines are effective for sealing gaps in existing obstacles but require time to emplace.

(5) **Close air support.** Planned CAS sorties can be requested and are an excellent means to aid in disengagement. Subordinate commanders use procedures for immediate requests. CAS can also deliver FASCAM and might be more effective than artillery.

(6) **Attack helicopters.** Attack helicopters can be OPCON to the brigade or battalion. They have an excellent antiarmor ability, and they can respond quickly to protect flanks and seal gaps. Attack helicopters can provide quick and violent assistance to the battalion disengaging from the enemy. They must arrive with the correct ordnance appropriate to the enemy force.

(7) **Other Army aviation assets.** Utility helicopters can increase the mobility of a delay force. Also, army aviation assets can aid in medical evacuation, resupply, reconnaissance, and command and control.

(8) **Air defense assets.** The battalion should use ADA to protect soldiers, choke points, and command groups. Air avenues of approach should be identified and ADA assets placed accordingly security must be provided.

(9) **Engineers.** Engineers can be attached or DS to a battalion. The battalion commander decides to allocate the platoon to the main effort or particular company, to provide area support to specific tasks, or to provide a specific number of hours to given units, engagement areas, or BPs. Creating obstacles and defensive positions should have top priority. The commander also integrates obstacles into the terrain to use existing obstacles and to increase the length of the delay, while helping to preserve the delay force.

(10) **Communications.** The means of communication must be redundant. The force must reduce radio transmissions to prevent the enemy from locating friendly positions. Other means of communications must be considered such as messengers and pyrotechnics. If available, EW assistance to deceive the enemy and to disrupt his command and control can be obtained from brigade.

(11) **Security and surveillance.** Ground sensors and surveillance devices can provide

some security in unobserved areas (flanks, dead space, and gaps) and during limited visibility.

g. **Combat Service Support.** Movement of trains and other CSS must be timely. Those assets must provide responsive service, yet their movement must not disrupt friendly combat units. Supplies and equipment that cannot be used or evacuated must be destroyed; however, destruction of medical supplies is a violation of the Geneva Convention.

(1) **Class V supplies.** Ammunition is expended in great amounts especially for mortars, TOWs, Dragons, and machine guns. The delay plan should include provisions for resupply such as pre-positioning ammunition at successive positions.

(2) **Medical evacuation.** Soldiers know they will receive care if they are wounded, which enhances morale. The commander must plan for and expect high casualty rates. He must use all available means of transportation to evacuate the nonwalking wounded. When possible, wounded soldiers should be evacuated quickly to prevent slowing the delay. If wounded soldiers must be left behind, they should be consolidated and a medic should remain with them.

h. **NBC Environment.** The battalion commander must prepare to operate routinely in an NBC environment, not as a special operation. In a chemical environment, the commander might choose the alternate method of delay to disperse his forces and to provide time for decontamination. The forward elements perform basic skills or hasty decontamination until they move to a position where other elements take up the battle. At positions in depth, soldiers can thoroughly decontaminate and change protective clothing.

i. **River Crossing.** The commander, during the analysis of terrain, must give priority to any obstacles that might have to be breached or crossed during the delay such as a river. In the case of a river crossing, any existing crossing sites must be protected. Engineers can prepare crossing sites if no sites exist. Planning can prevent the delay plan from being jeopardized by water obstacles.

j. **Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain.** MOUT should not be considered special operations but should be incorporated

into the terrain analysis of METT-T. Built-up areas can provide formidable obstacles, good defensive terrain, or both. (FMs 90-10 and 90-10-1 provide more information about MOUT.)

k. **Limited Visibility.** Disengagement might be easier during limited visibility. Limited visibility can be natural or man-generated. Smoke can be used to silhouette and confuse the enemy. As enemy vehicles emerge from smoke, they should be easier to see and engage. Systems that have a see-through-smoke or shoot-through-smoke ability should be concentrated along the most dangerous avenues of approach. Also, limited visibility increases security requirements for the delaying force.

l. **Contingency Planning.** Contingency planning, especially counterattack planning, for a delay operation is required to extend reaction time and to take advantage of opportunities.

## 5-10. CONDUCT OF A DELAY

The initial delay position is occupied in the same manner as a defensive position. The same techniques of security and priority of work apply in conducting the delay (Chapter 4). The use of deception to make the enemy think he will encounter a determined defense increases the amount of delay.

a. The battalion takes the approaching enemy under long-range fires. Every effort is made to inflict casualties on the enemy, to disorganize him, and to make him stop for reorganization. If the enemy masses, he becomes susceptible to the battalion's fires.

b. Decisive engagement is avoided except when needed to accomplish the mission. Each position occupied by a forward unit is defended until the enemy threatens decisive engagement or envelopment of the position.

c. Brigade approves battalion disengagement criteria. In turn, battalion approves company disengagement criteria. These criteria allow units to begin movement IAW established plans—for example, when the enemy reaches Phase Line Blue or on order of the higher commander. Since the battalion might be more vulnerable as it moves, the move is conducted only after considering the following questions:

(1) What is the strength, composition, and location of the enemy attacking force?

(2) Are elements of the company threatened with decisive engagement or bypass?

(3) What is the status of adjacent units, and how does it affect the battalion's ability to continue to delay?

(4) What is the condition of the delay force in terms of losses in men, equipment, and weapons?

(5) How strong is this particular position in relation to other positions that can be occupied? If extensive effort has been put into preparation of the position, or if it is the last one available, the battalion commander might be forced to remain in the position longer.

(6) Is unit survivability or time the key to the mission? If it is a high-risk delay and the company has gained only one of an anticipated five hours on the position, more effort might be required to retain the position. However, the conditions that impose time requirements are subject to change and should be revised, if needed.

(7) Can other means be used, besides movement, to continue the delay—for example, nuclear, chemical, and conventional fires; spoiling attacks; reinforcements?

d. The movement to the next delay position begins when the required delay has been achieved. Coordination of fires between the moving element and adjacent, supporting, and overwatch elements is critical. Primary and backup signals for exact locations of the lead, trail, and flank elements must be planned for all conditions of visibility to ensure the best use of available combat power.

e. The commander has several disengagement options for aiding elements of the battalion that are threatened with decisive engagement or that have become decisively engaged. In order of priority, the commander has the following options:

(1) Allocate priority of indirect supporting fires and aerial fires to the threatened unit. This is the most rapid and responsive method of increasing relative combat power of the unit.

(2) Direct adjacent units to engage enemy targets forward of the threatened unit.

(3) Reposition combat and CS elements so that they can support the threatened unit. This might require changes in tasks or in task organization.

(4) Counterattack to disengage. The battalion commander must make a rapid, yet cautious, evaluation of the potential gains or losses of this COA. The counterattack force must have greater relative mobility than the attacker. Attack helicopters are suitable for this mission.

f. All forces can be deployed during the delay. If they are, the battalion commander should designate the least engaged force to constitute a reserve. This is true when delaying on successive positions. When using the alternate method, the reserve might consist of an element in depth. When assigned multiple missions, the reserve force must be given a priority of missions for planning. Reserve tasks include the following:

- Reinforcing.
- Assisting disengagement.
- Providing overwatch.
- Blocking.
- Assuming another unit's mission.

g. Reorganization of forces might be SOP, but it requires attention to detail. Key leaders must be replaced, ammunition redistributed, and elements reorganized. Soldiers, squads, or

platoons may need to be integrated into other units to maintain combat power. The chain of command must be more than two deep to ensure a logical replacement sequence and to lessen confusion. Crew-served weapons receive a priority of manning, and ammunition is cross-leveled to ensure all systems are used. Radios are replaced on critical nets—for example, command and control, fire direction to maintain control, and fire support.

h. Command and control of the delay requires close coordination. The successive technique, which the battalion commander can control by being forward, might be easier to control than the alternate technique. With the alternate technique, the battalion commander can be well forward since the XO is in charge of positions in depth. The commander can take charge of the forces in depth once the forward elements move back. He can assign the XO to reorganize the depleted forces and to supervise preparation of the next position. A plan must be developed so that the delay can be executed smoothly.

i. Delays are not an end in themselves; each delay operation must end with a planned result such as a defense, a withdrawal, or an attack.

### Section III WITHDRAWAL OPERATIONS

A withdrawal is an operation in which a force in contact with the enemy frees itself for a new mission.

#### 5-11. PURPOSE

A withdrawal is conducted to disengage from the enemy when the battalion commander decides to reposition all or part of his force. The two types of withdrawals are withdrawal under enemy pressure and withdrawal not under enemy pressure. The main difference is the intensity of enemy pressure.

a. All or part of the battalion can conduct a withdrawal while engaged in a defensive, delaying, or offensive operation. The commander designates elements to remain in contact with the enemy for deception and security. He can designate a reserve or allow the least engaged unit to constitute the reserve. In withdrawals, reserves are positioned well forward. Battalion withdrawal

operations can include the battalion operating as a flank or rear guard for a brigade or division withdrawal. When the battalion is withdrawing under pressure, its reserve can launch attacks to disorganize, disrupt and delay the enemy attack.

(1) ***Withdrawal under enemy pressure.*** This type of withdrawal depends on maneuver, firepower, and control since the enemy will try to pursue the withdrawing force.

(2) ***Withdrawal not under enemy pressure.*** This type of withdrawal requires deception and depends on speed of execution.

b. Withdrawals are either assisted or unassisted.

(1) ***Assisted withdrawal.*** In this type of withdrawal, security elements provided by the

next higher headquarters help the main body break contact with the enemy.

(2) **Unassisted withdrawal.** In this type of withdrawal, the battalion provides its own security element.

### 5-12. METT-T ANALYSIS

The battalion commander considers METT-T factors when planning a withdrawal based on the mission statement.

a. **Mission.** Mission orders are essential. Missions given to units depend on whether the unit is under enemy pressure. The future mission of the battalion affects planning of the withdrawal.

b. **Enemy.** The following questions about the enemy must be answered:

(1) How can the enemy interfere with disengagement and displacement?

(2) What deceptive means can be taken?

c. **Terrain.** The following questions about the terrain must be answered:

(1) What terrain is available to complement the withdrawal plan?

(2) How can obstacles be used to facilitate the withdrawal?

(3) What effects will routes and the availability of overwatch positions and choke points have on movement?

(4) Can limited visibility aid in the withdrawal?

(5) How will weather affect trafficability?

d. **Troops and Time Available.** The following questions about troops and time available must be answered:

(1) How much time is available for reconnoitering, planning, issuing orders, moving to initial positions, and preparing obstacles and positions?

(2) What assets are available to improve the battalion's mobility? To decrease the enemy's mobility?

(3) Is the brigade providing a security force? If so, where is it? If not, how many and what type of security elements must be designated within the battalion?

### 5-13. PLANNING

Planning for withdrawal requires attention to detail, widest possible dissemination of the plan, and reconnaissance by all subordinate elements.

Due to the benefit of remaining undetected, the battalion must consider deception and OPSEC. Control measures are important during planning for a withdrawal. When observation is restricted, the control measures for a withdrawal from linear positions under pressure include the following:

a. A phase line aids in control of unit movements and fires, and marks where responsibility for the sector is transferred.

b. On-order boundaries are designated in advance for use when the security force fails to slow the enemy, becomes bypassed, or cannot disengage the bulk of the battalion.

### 5-14. CONDUCT OF A WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawals are accomplished in three overlapping phases.

a. **Preparation Phase.** Elements reconnoiter and dispatch quartering parties, issue warning orders, and begin planning. Those not required to support the operation, such as trains, elements of the main CP, and nonessential vehicles, are relocated to the rear. The enemy must not know about this relocation. As time allows, obstacles are prepared to slow enemy movement. If appropriate, preparation begins on rearward positions to be occupied.

b. **Disengagement Phase.** Designated elements begin their movement to the rear. When covered from enemy direct fire and observation, they assemble and conduct a tactical movement to a subsequent position.

c. **Security Phase.** A security element aids disengagement of other elements, assumes responsibility for the battalion sector, deceives the enemy, and protects the movement of disengaged elements through the use of fire and movement. This phase ends when security forces have conducted a rearward passage through the next occupied position to the rear.

### 5-15. WITHDRAWAL NOT UNDER ENEMY PRESSURE

Speed and deception measures are vital to the success of the mission in the withdrawal not under pressure. The enemy must not know that a withdrawal is taking place. The DLIC is not large or strong enough to withstand a large enemy force. If the withdrawal is discovered, the

enemy might overwhelm the DLIC and expose the rest of the battalion.

a. The DLIC can deceive the enemy into believing that friendly forces are remaining in position. Other deceptive measures include the following:

- (1) Continue communications; neither increase nor decrease radio traffic.
- (2) Continue patrolling activity, if established.
- (3) Use limited visibility to cover withdrawal.

b. Operations security complements the deception plan. The battalion maintains noise and light discipline, masks movements by surrounding noise such as artillery fire, and continues counterreconnaissance activities.

c. The commander conducts a reconnaissance and establishes control measures before a withdrawal not under pressure (Figure 5-3).

(1) Routes are identified by a name or number. They begin at an easily recognized point (preferably to the rear of the assembly area or position); they continue directly to the next position. Units are released only after they cross the last obstacles forward of that position. Alternate routes may also be selected if primary routes cannot be used. One route may be used by two or more units if a priority is established. When a unit withdraws from a mounted enemy, all of its routes should be on restrictive terrain. To prevent the enemy from following, the last unit to use each route emplaces obstacles.

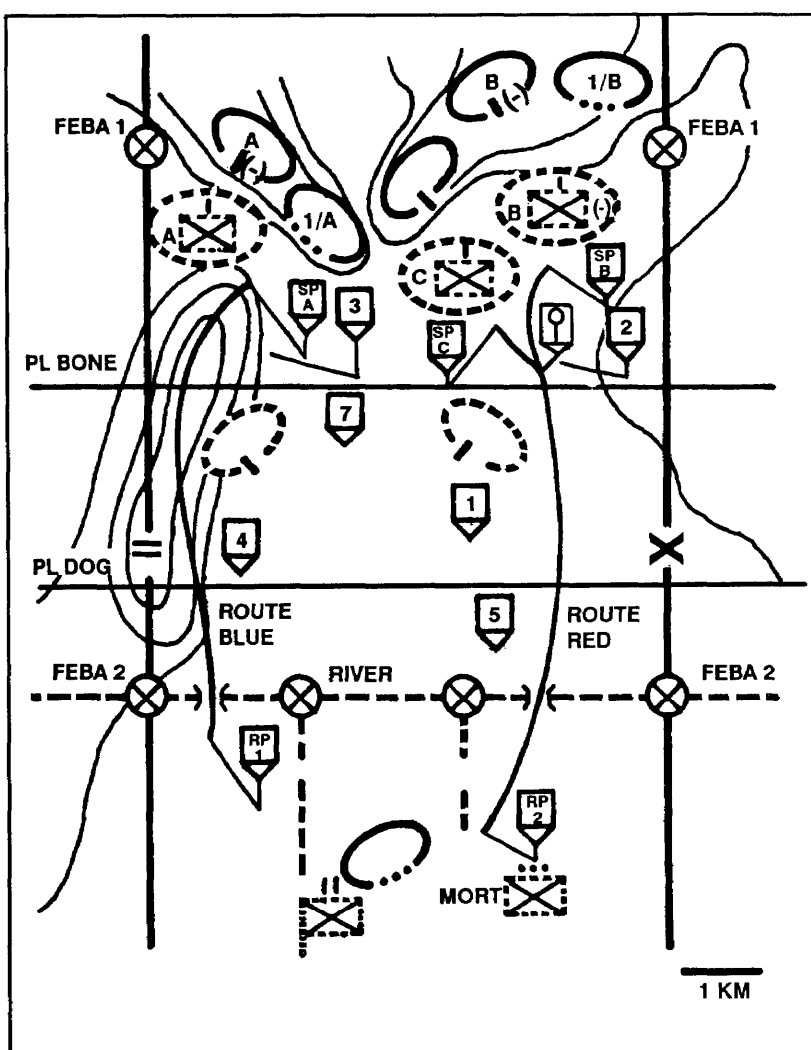
(2) Assembly areas should be located on good routes of withdrawal well forward. This allows the units to regain control rapidly while under cover from enemy direct fires and observation. To allow rapid access to all using elements away from CPs and FSEs, the assembly areas are positioned laterally and are large enough for dispersion.

(3) Traffic Control points may be established where routes merge or where other problems or confusion could occur during movement.

(4) Phase lines, TRPs, and checkpoints may be designated to aid in movement control and to shift direct-fire responsibility, which simplifies possible changes in the mission.

(5) Element locations are designated for future missions.

(6) On-order boundaries or battle positions are planned in depth. This gives the commander flexibility if the withdrawal is temporarily stopped or if the enemy threatens bypass or engagement of withdrawing elements. If on-order boundaries are used, projected unit responsibilities should be clear. Battle positions can be numbered or lettered for ease of identification.



**Figure 5-3. Control measures for a withdrawal not under pressure.**

d. Key leaders, during the reconnaissance, learn start points, routes, release points, and avenues of approach. Routes with few choke points are selected for the cover and concealment they provide. Reconnaissance should be performed under the same conditions of visibility expected at the time of the withdrawal. This might entail a daylight and night reconnaissance. Guides ensure that units move in the specified direction.

e. The OPORD directs the following:

(1) The size, composition, mission, and commander of the DLIC. (The DLIC is normally up to one-third of the size of the force.)

(2) The time for the withdrawal to start.

(3) The location of the battalion avenue of approach (if used), and the actions each company performs on its arrival.

(4) The location of each company avenue of approach.

(5) The location of routes from the company avenues of approach to the battalion avenue of approach or to the next position.

(6) Subsequent battalion and company missions.

f. Simultaneous disengagement and movement by all battalion elements without a DLIC might be feasible when the battalion has a mobility advantage over enemy forces such as when a major obstacle separates the battalion from the enemy or transport is available. If more than one battalion conducts the withdrawal, the brigade order can specify the use of a DLIC.

g. The battalion commander can use one of two methods to establish a DLIC. First, the DLIC can be organized from elements of each company in contact with or near the enemy. Command and control of the DLIC is exercised by a part of the battalion command element to simulate normal battalion activities. The battalion XO might be in charge of the battalion DLIC, with company XOs in charge of their DLICs. Second, the battalion commander can leave a company intact as the DLIC under the control of the company commander. When that occurs, elements of the company have to be repositioned to cover the entire battalion sector.

h. The battalion commander prescribes, within limitations imposed by brigade, the size of the DLIC. He can also state that specific

elements remain such as TOWs, Dragons and, when available, armored vehicles. Depending on METT-T factors, the DLIC might consist of one-third of the force. It must detect and engage the enemy on all avenues of approach with both direct and indirect fires. The location of the DLIC should provide an ability to fight if the enemy attacks during the withdrawal. Because of the mission, the DLIC is provided with available helicopters, tanks, trucks, or other means to make it as mobile and lethal as possible. In an assisted withdrawal not under pressure, the brigade establishes the DLIC. The battalion might be tasked to augment the brigade DLIC.

i. The main body of the battalion consists of all maneuver, CS, and control elements not required by the DLIC. The mission of the main body is to disengage using stealth, to move rapidly along designated routes, to assemble, and to move to a new location in preparation for the next mission.

j. Reserves or combat elements positioned in depth can withdraw before elements of the forward companies, but they withdraw after the forward elements have disengaged. This provides more flexibility and security if the enemy detects the withdrawal and attacks. When a security force is provided from a higher level, reserves can withdraw before the bulk of the forward units. This can also be done when preparation for the future mission of the battalion is of higher priority than the security the reserve could offer to the withdrawing unit.

k. Vehicles and personnel not required and quartering parties from battalion units use infiltration techniques to move to their next positions before the effective time of the withdrawal. At the time designated for the withdrawal, forward elements not required by the DLIC leave their positions, move to the rear, and assemble.

(1) Widely dispersed elements in depth or reserves can assemble then move to the rear, based on the commander's priorities (A, Figure 5-4).

(2) Elements of the main body move to the rear either on order of the commander or IAW plans and priorities. Due to the lack of a higher level security force and to the availability of only two routes to the rear, the battalion commander

is most likely to leave his reserve in position until other elements begin their movement. Once the forward companies have cleared a given point—in this case, a phase line—the reserve moves to its new position and begins to prepare for its next mission (B, Figure 5-4, page 5-16).

(3) The main body elements of the battalion are met at release points by individual quartering parties; they all move to and occupy designated positions and continue to prepare for their new mission. To deceive the enemy, the DLIC commander assumes full control of and responsibility for the battalion sector, covers the movement of the main body, and maintains activities previously conducted by the entire battalion (C, Figure 5-4, page 5-16).

(4) The rest of the battalion disengages and moves to the rear on order of the brigade DLIC commander. They use the same assembly areas and routes used by the main body, are met by parent elements, and are guided into their positions to begin their new mission. Contact with the enemy is maintained either by a security element from a higher headquarters or by the

battalion DLIC. The element that maintains contact provides rear security and accomplishes its mission by screening between the withdrawing security force and the enemy; it either makes a rearward passage or continues its security mission forward of the battalion as it arrives at the new FEBA (D, Figure 5-4, page 5-17).

1. The main body moves on designated routes to the next position. They can be given on-order missions to defend, delay, or counterattack during the withdrawal.

### 5-16. WITHDRAWAL UNDER ENEMY PRESSURE

The sequence of events in a withdrawal under enemy pressure is different from the sequence in a withdrawal not under enemy pressure.

a. A reconnaissance is conducted to the rear during a withdrawal under pressure to identify routes that offer the best cover and concealment and to determine engineer assistance required to overcome obstacles. The planning resembles that for a delay in regard to the use of organic and nonorganic assets.

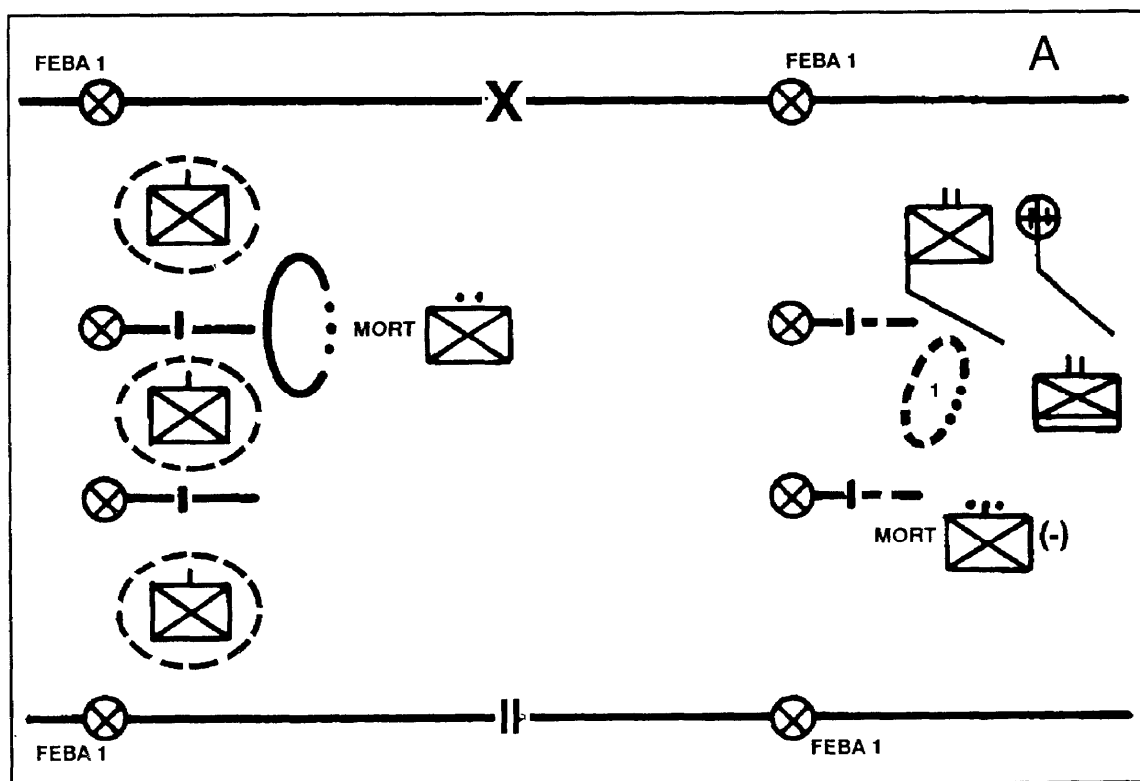


Figure 5-4. Sequence of withdrawal not under pressure.

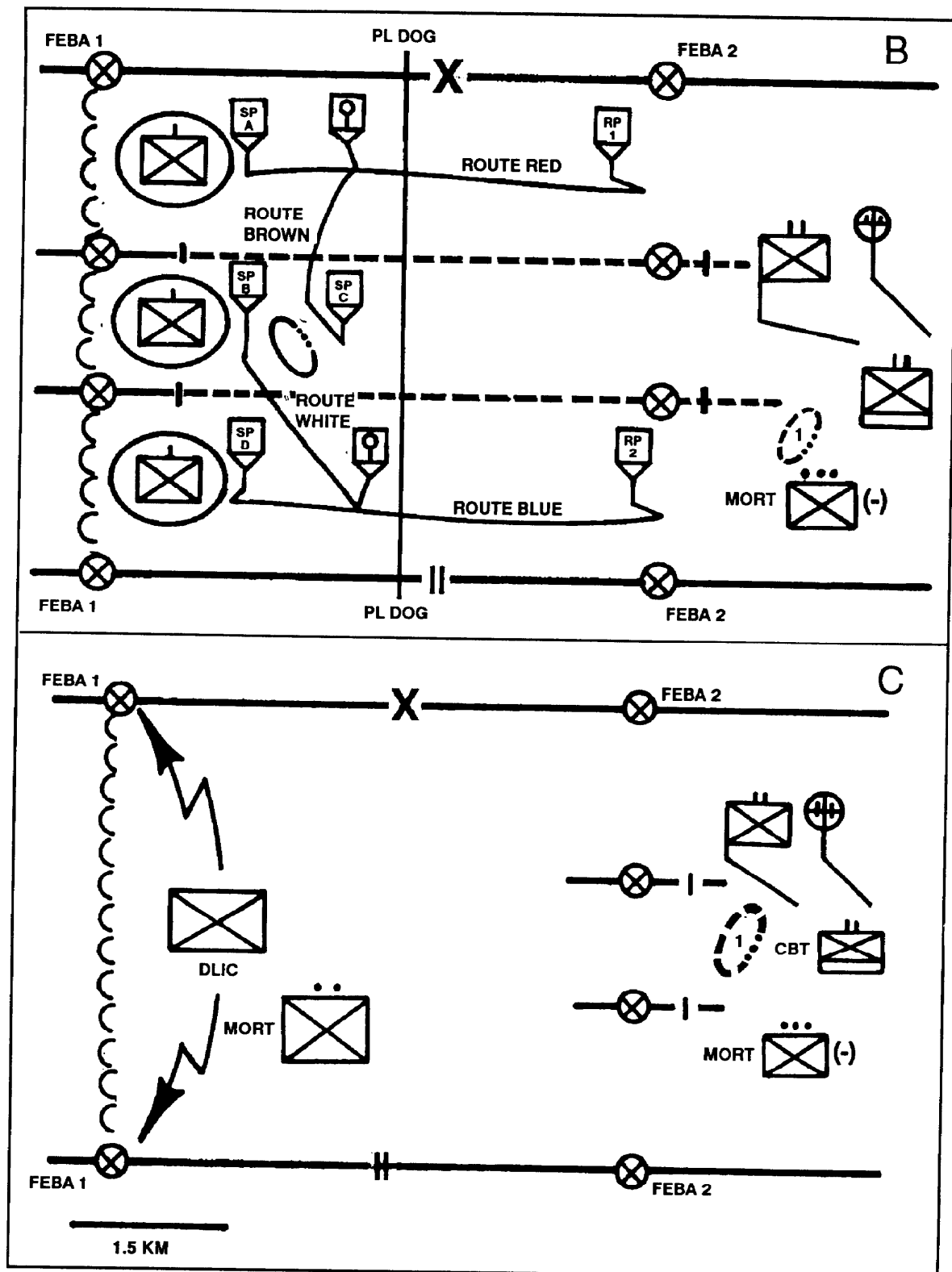
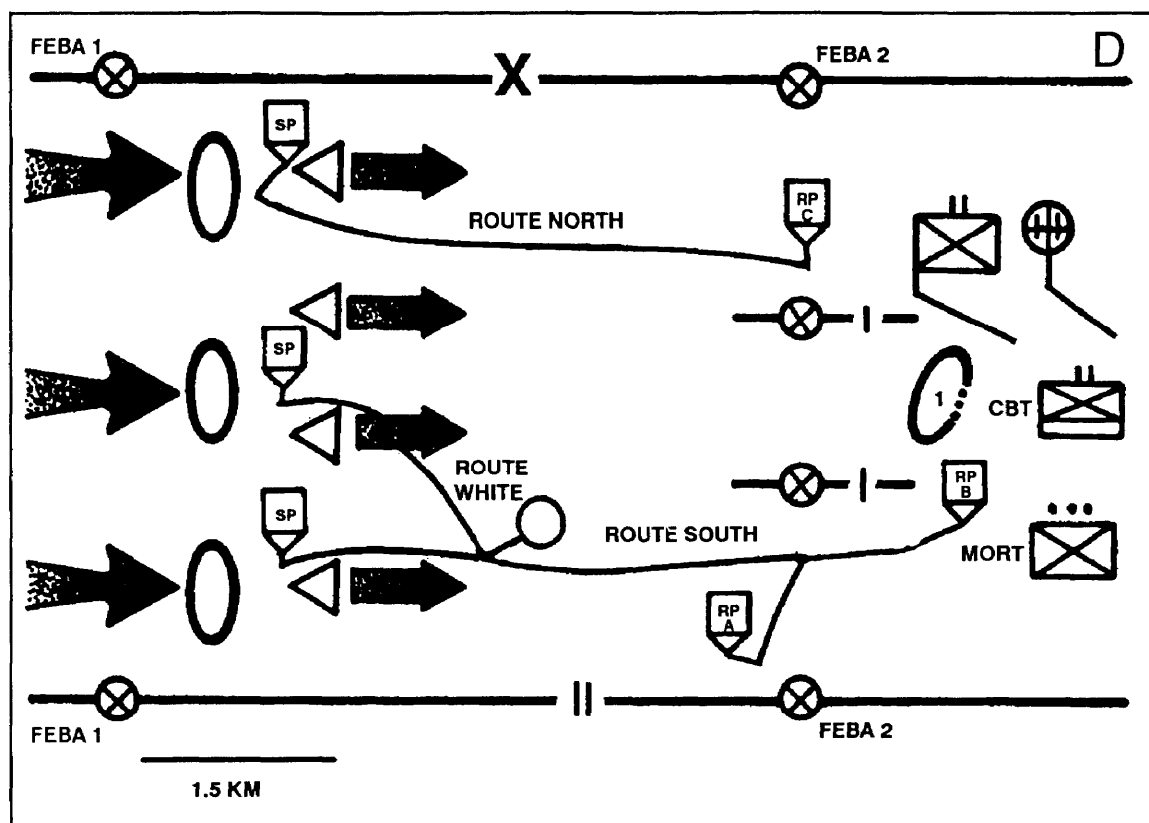


Figure 5-4. Sequence of withdrawal not under pressure  
(continued).





**Figure 5-4. Sequence of withdrawal not under pressure (continued).**

b. In open terrain, higher headquarters sometimes provides security for a battalion withdrawal under pressure. This security force comprises elements that can detect the enemy at long ranges such as air cavalry or air assault forces. This force is in turn supported by long-range fires from artillery, close air support, and attack helicopters. Normally, all battalion forces disengage at the same time, relying on the firepower of the security elements to obscure and suppress the enemy. Once the battalion has disengaged, it assembles its elements and moves on multiple routes or by aircraft to a designated location (Figure 5-5, page 5-18).

(1) When observation is unrestricted, the sequence of withdrawal from linear positions under pressure is as follows:

(a) All battalion units disengage covered by security elements of the brigade or division.

(b) Battalion units out of contact assemble and move on designated routes to their next position.

(c) The battalion reserve can move on a designated route, make a passage, and continue to its next position.

(2) When observation is unrestricted, control measures for a withdrawal from linear positions under pressure are as follows:

(a) Lateral boundaries are solid back to where security forces assume responsibility of the sector.

(b) Passage lanes and contact points are provided for units making a rearward passage, for support elements, and for units not in contact.

(c) On-order boundaries are designated in advance for use if the security force fails, is bypassed, or is otherwise unable to slow the enemy or disengage the battalion.

(d) A phase line is used to aid in control of unit movement and fires and to mark where responsibility for the sector is transferred.

c. The security force is critical to the success of the withdrawal under pressure. Options exist for organizing and deploying the security force.

Critical planning factors are terrain, enemy mobility, and the amount of pressure being applied. If the situation permits, the security force can be placed in an overwatch position. A security force mission could be assigned to

a unit in reserve or could be provided by a higher headquarters. The forward companies would use fire and movement to fight their way behind the security forces, who would pick up the battle.

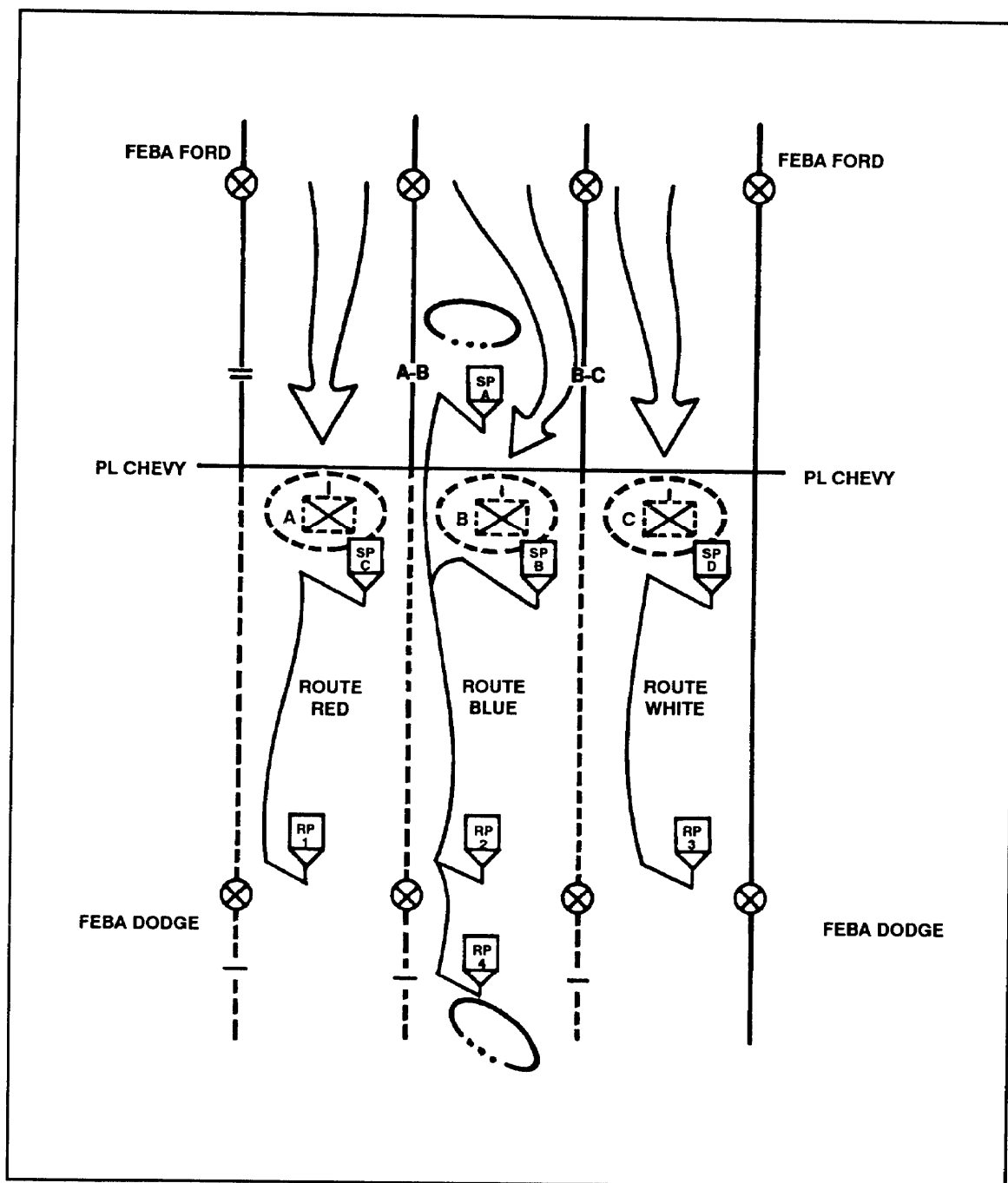


Figure 5-5. Withdrawal from linear positions under pressure (open observation).

d. The battalion must form the security force from forward company elements if the terrain restricts observation of the enemy to short ranges (Figure 5-6). The elements, generally the battalion reserve augmented with other infantry, mortar, and supporting elements, position themselves to observe infantry approaches and to direct efforts of artillery, mortars, tactical air, and air cavalry in support of the force. They can support the force—

(1) To disrupt, disorganize, or retard the enemy's ability to pursue withdrawing elements of the battalion.

(2) To use smoke to reduce the enemy's ability to observe movement of the battalion.

(3) To concentrate more combat power in critical areas to prevent decisive engagement of battalion elements.

e. The sequence of withdrawal from linear positions under pressure (Figure 5-6) is as follows when observation is restricted:

(1) Forward units disengage, covered by elements of the battalion security force. To ensure continuous observation across the battalion sector, forward companies detach elements as required. Task organization changes

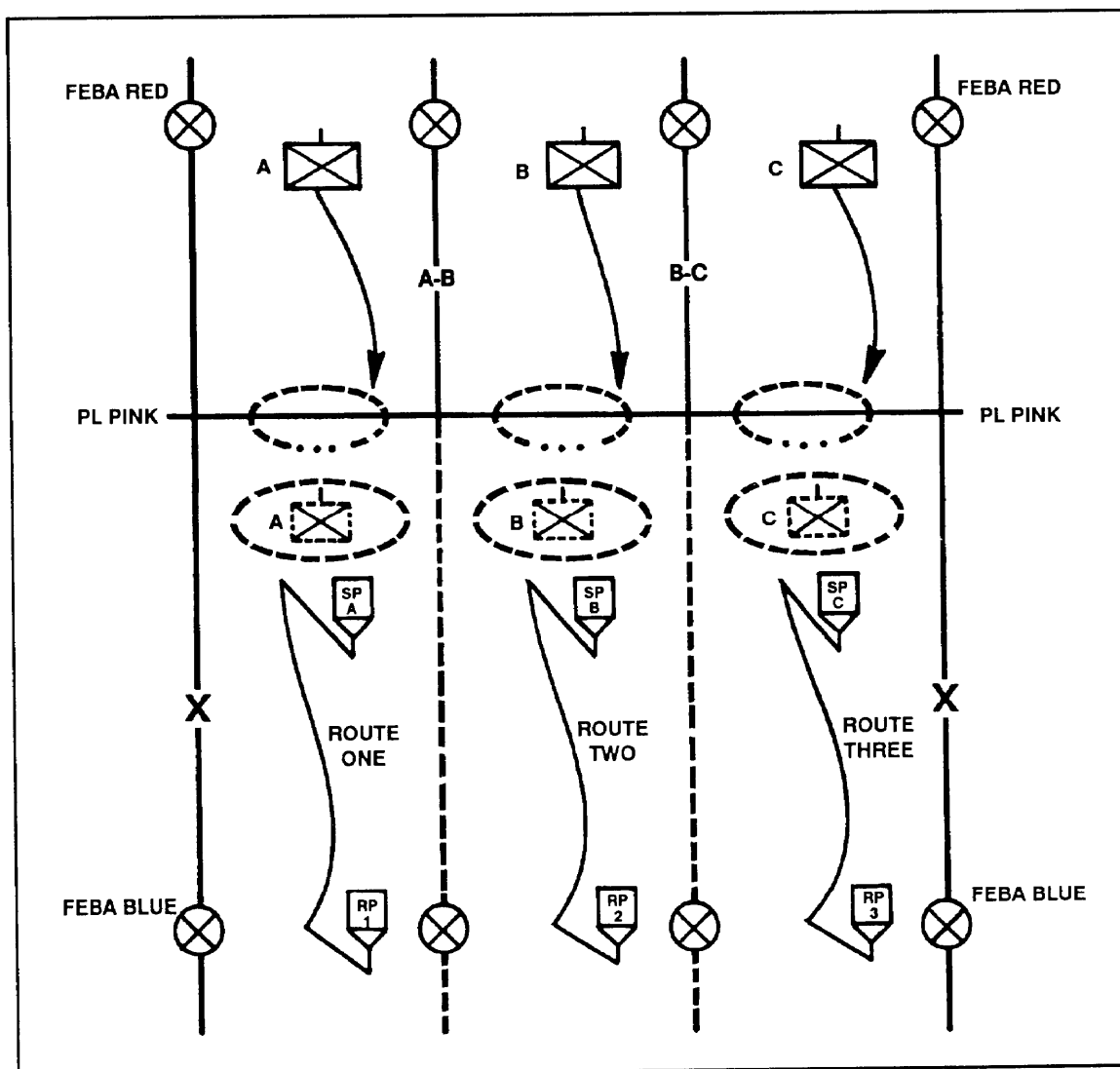


Figure 5-6. Withdrawal from linear positions under pressure (restricted observation).

are made at mutually agreed upon times and places. In this example, Companies A, B, and C each detach a platoon to the overwatch force at PL PINK. These platoons should be in position before forward elements withdraw.

(2) The battalion security force deploys to engage the enemy on all avenues of approach then, until instructed to disengage, delays the enemy forward of the next occupied position to the rear.

(3) Forward units assemble when out of contact then move on designated routes to the next position.

f. Units in contact engage the enemy, as the order to withdraw is given, with concentrated direct and indirect fires. These fires, coupled with obstacles and the proper use of terrain, create a temporary mobility advantage for the withdrawing force, enabling it to disengage, assemble, and move to the next position.

g. The security force must “pick up” the fight from the disengaging forward elements. It assumes responsibility for the entire battalion

sector, delays the enemy advance while the bulk of the battalion conducts movement to the rear, and then, on order or when other predetermined criteria are met, disengages and moves to the rear (Figure 5-7). Depending on the battalion's next mission, the security force might need to maintain contact with the enemy throughout the operation by fighting to the rear. The security force can join the main body or pass through the next occupied position. It then moves to its prescribed position.

(1) Targets are planned before the withdrawal—

(a) On known and suspected enemy locations (including indirect-fire targets).

(b) Along avenues of approach.

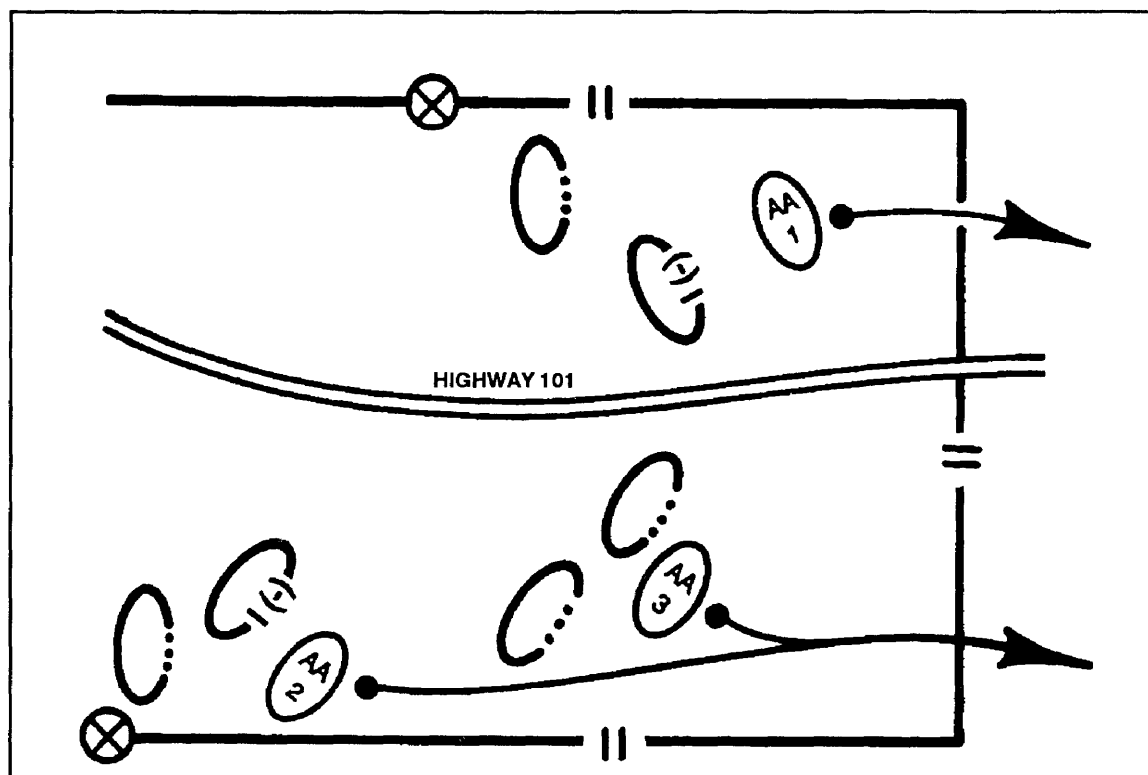
(c) On and behind unit positions.

(d) Along routes of withdrawal.

(e) To cover obstacles.

(2) Target reference points are designated—

(a) At first, to mass antiarmor fires to aid in disengagement of the withdrawing unit.



**Figure 5-7. Withdrawal from dispositions in depth under pressure.**

(b) Later, to shift fires to compensate for gaps in antiarmor coverage created by the displacement of units.

(3) Assembly areas should be—

(a) Located on armor-restrictive terrain.

(b) Covered from enemy direct fire.

(c) Concealed from air or ground observation.

(d) Large enough to allow adequate dispersion.

(e) Occupied as necessary to regain control before movement.

(4) Routes are designated where withdrawing units can move undetected from their assembly area to their subsequent positions by the most direct means. One route may be used by two or more units when a priority of movement is established. Alternate routes are selected and used as necessary. To preclude enemy pursuit, obstacles are planned and executed along with withdrawal routes. These routes—

(a) Are on armor-restrictive terrain.

(b) Provide cover from enemy direct fire.

(c) Provide concealment from air and ground observation.

(5) Checkpoints, contact points, phase lines, and other control measures can also be used as required to aid in control of movement.

(6) Supporting fires are concentrated to suppress enemy fires in the area of the withdrawing element.

(7) Antiarmor fires from all units are used against exposed enemy.

(8) The sequence of withdrawal from positions in depth under pressure is as follows:

(a) Infantry not required for security of antiarmor weapons assembles and moves to the rear.

(b) Security forces provide security for withdrawal of infantry, then disengage.

(c) Remaining elements of the battalion disengage in turn, employing the same procedure.

(9) The battalion's organic firepower is reduced as elements withdraw. The remaining elements become increasingly dependent on indirect fires, attack helicopters, and obstacles to slow the enemy. If sufficient combat power cannot be massed in a given area, units might be required to infiltrate from positions during reduced visibility.

h. The brigade commander can commit the brigade reserve if the enemy attack is stronger than the security force can disrupt; or, he can direct counterattacks by units already disengaged from the battalion. If the battalion elements are required, the most mobile assets available should be used. The early use of attack helicopters or CAS can keep ground forces from having to reengage the enemy before the withdrawal is completed.

## Section IV RETIREMENT OPERATIONS

A retirement is an operation where a force not in contact moves away from the enemy in an organized manner. A withdrawal from action becomes a retirement after the main force has disengaged from the enemy and march columns have been formed. A battalion usually conducts a retirement as part of a larger force. A retirement can have an adverse impact on the morale of friendly soldiers. Leadership must be positive and discipline maintained. Any rumors associated with the conduct of a retirement can be stopped by informing soldiers of the purpose of the retirement and the future intentions of the battalion.

### 5-17. PURPOSE

A retirement can be made—

a. To increase the distance between the defender and the enemy.

b. To occupy more favorable terrain.

c. To reduce the distance between maneuver and CSS elements.

d. To conform to the disposition of a higher command.

e. To permit employment of a unit in another sector.

#### **5-18. METT-T ANALYSIS**

A METT-T analysis for retirements is similar to one for delay and withdrawal. Security and speed must be emphasized when conducting a retirement. The battalion is organized to fight but does so only in self-defense. Units move at night when possible. The battalion may be required to infiltrate during daylight. Commanders emphasize the use of OPSEC measures during their movement.

#### **5-19. PLANNING**

planning for a retirement is also similar to that for a delay and withdrawal.

#### **5-20. CONDUCT OF A RETIREMENT**

Appropriate advance security, flank security, and rear security are provided. When contact with the enemy is possible, such as when a withdrawal has preceded a retirement, a strong rear guard is employed. If the enemy attacks the rear, the rear guard uses delay tactics to extend the distance between the main body and the enemy.